

# Introduction: The Textuality and Materiality of Reading in Early Modern England

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IN HIS MAGISTERIAL NEW STUDY of early modern marginalia, *Used Books*, William Sherman writes that “as for ‘reading,’ I have come—like Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazzio—to prefer the language of ‘use.’”<sup>1</sup> In this volume, we make the case for the continued usefulness of the concept of “reading” in our critical discourse, if only to remind ourselves that this activity remained the privileged aspiration of many book owners, as well as those who would have liked to join them, and we argue for a renewed focus on the “textuality” of reading alongside the materiality of the book.

Sherman’s preference for the terminology of “book use” will resonate with anyone who has picked up an early modern book and tried to make sense of the diverse scribbles that are such a ubiquitous feature of early print culture. As Sherman explains, many of these marks do not respond to the text that they surround, even obliquely. As signs of ownership, samples of handwriting practice, records of the annotator’s life and affairs, declarations of love, and much more, they often resist our attempts to use them as a means to recover past practices of reading. Writing in books, however, does offer rich evidence of their role as material artifacts “in the reader’s social life, family history, professional practices, political commitments, and devotional rituals”<sup>2</sup>—uses that can all-too-easily be obscured by a narrow focus on the activity of reading.

The predilection of recent scholars for the term “book use” reflects the origins of the history of reading within the discipline of the history of the book. In one of the defining contributions to the field, “What is the History of Books?,” Robert Darn-ton put forward the notion of a “communications circuit,” which offered a model of the different phases in the life of the book—from its conception by the author to its

1. William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia, 2008), xiii; the reference is to Bradin Cormack and Carla Mazzio, *Book Use, Book Theory 1500–1700* (Chicago, 2005).

2. Sherman, *Used Books*, xiii.

publication, distribution, and sale by the printer-bookseller, to its reception by readers and, in later periods, reviewers—and the interaction of different stages in this process with each other.<sup>3</sup> Much of the best work in the field has responded to Darnton's challenge to analyze reading within a wider framework of the production, circulation, and consumption of books. Focusing on evidence such as marginalia, commonplace books, and library inventories, it has highlighted the material dimensions of books and reading, rather than the textual ones.<sup>4</sup>

This approach has brought many benefits and will no doubt continue to do so. At the time Darnton's essay was published, it is important to remember, literary criticism was still dominated by formalism. Reader-response critics such as Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss, and, more idiosyncratically, Stanley Fish had started to argue for the importance of readers in creating the meaning of texts. But, as Darnton noted, what they proposed was a theory of reading, not a history; they continued to refer to "the reader" of the text in the singular, using phrases such as "the ideal reader," "the implied reader," and "the intended reader."<sup>5</sup> It is one of the achievements of the history of reading to have drawn attention to the importance of real historical readers, and to have shown just how different their responses could be from our own. In a groundbreaking study, for example, Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton uncovered the surprising application of Livy's history of Rome to the colonial ventures of Elizabethan Englishmen in Ireland and other contemporary political schemes. They also highlighted the different physical tools used by readers in the period, notably the book wheel—"Windows 1498," as David Norbrook memorably called it—and their impact on the way in which readers engaged with books.<sup>6</sup>

Another important contribution of historians of books and reading has been to show that the traces men and women left behind are just as worthy of our attention as the literary texts that they surround. This shift is reflected in the increasing number of books and articles analyzing marginal annotations to early modern literary and other types of texts and exploring their significance for our understanding of the

3. Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?," *Daedalus* 111 (1982): 65–83, reprinted in *The Kiss of the Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (London, 1990), 107–35. Darnton developed his analysis of reading in "First Steps toward a History of Reading," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 23 (1986): 5–30, reprinted in *The Kiss of the Lamourette*, 154–87.

4. A notable example is the excellent Material Texts series published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, which, besides Sherman's book, includes *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Lotte Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia, 2002), and *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia, 2007). See also *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge, 1996).

5. Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, 1974) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London, 1978); Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton, U.K., 1982); Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980).

6. Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past and Present* 129 (1990): 30–78; David Norbrook, review of *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* by Kevin Sharpe in *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 July 2000.

reception of these books (some of which we note below). It is also demonstrated in library catalogues, which increasingly include copy-specific information such as marginal annotations, and catalogues of books with annotations in particular collections (although neither type generally includes much detail about the content of the marginalia).<sup>7</sup> In addition, editors of early modern texts have become more aware of the significance of marks left by readers when surveying different copies of the texts for variant readings and have started to include information on marginalia in their introductions and annotations.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, book historians have drawn attention to the significance of books and reading in, and their impact on, the wider culture of early modern England and Europe. Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, and William Sherman have demonstrated the respect accorded to the readings of scholars such as Gabriel Harvey and John Dee by the major players in the political world of Elizabethan England.<sup>9</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis and Jason Scott-Warren have focused on the book as gift in early modern Europe and the social relationships involved in such exchanges (patronage, friendship, family bonds).<sup>10</sup> And one of the defining studies of the new discipline of the history of the book, Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, highlighted the importance of print in three of the major cultural developments of the early modern period: the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the scientific revolution. While Eisenstein's specific claims are controversial, the success of her book, and others like it, is witnessed by the fact that few would now deny the profound impact of books and reading on the culture and society of early modern Europe.

7. For the former, see, for example, the catalogues of the Folger Shakespeare Library (<http://shakespeare.folger.edu>) and some Oxford colleges, accessible through the online union catalogue (<http://www.lib.ox.ac.uk/olis>); see also the British Library's recently catalogued Sloane printed books collection (<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/sloane>). For examples of the latter, see R. C. Alston, *Books with Manuscript: A Short Title Catalogue of Books with Manuscript Notes in the British Library, Including Books with Manuscript Additions, Proofsheets, Illustrations, Corrections* (London, 1994); and Bernard M. Rosenthal, *The Rosenthal Collection of Printed Books with Manuscript Annotations: A Catalog of 242 Editions Mostly before 1600, Annotated by Contemporary or Near-Contemporary Readers* (New Haven, Conn., 1997).

8. See, for example, George Gascoigne, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, ed. G. W. Pigman III (Oxford, 2000); *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor et al. (Oxford, 2007); *The 1671 Poems: "Paradise Regain'd" and "Samson Agonistes"*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of John Milton* (Oxford, 2008). See also John Pitcher, "Benefiting from the Book: The Oxford Edition of Samuel Daniel," *Yearbook of English Studies* 29 (1999): 69–87 at 79–82, and, more broadly, John Kerigan, "The Editor as Reader: Constructing Renaissance Texts," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading*, ed. Raven, Small, and Tadmor, 102–24.

9. Jardine and Grafton, "Studied for Action"; Lisa Jardine and William Sherman, "Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in Late Elizabethan England," in *Religion, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge, 1994), 102–24; William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, Mass., 1995).

10. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 33 (1983): 69–88, and *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 2000); Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford, 2001).

Yet there are limitations too. It is easy to forget that readers not only owned *books*, but that they also often engaged with *texts*, sometimes carelessly or opportunistically, but sometimes quite closely. The emphasis on the materiality of books separate from textual concerns was understandable in view of the neglect of these features in previous literary (and indeed historical) studies and the ambition of book history to establish itself as an independent discipline with its own distinct methodology and object of study. Indeed, it has been a significant achievement of book history to remind us that books consisted of more than the text alone, and that agents other than the author were involved in the creation and circulation of books as material artifacts.

Nonetheless, we think it is an opportune time to extend the currently popular models of book use and to renew attention to the “textuality” of reading: to the words on the page or parchment as well as to the “visual, oral, and numeric data in the form of maps, prints, and music” encompassed by D. F. McKenzie’s perhaps more familiar, expanded use of the term “text.”<sup>11</sup> After all, much has changed in the field of literary studies since the early days of the history of reading in the 1980s. The formalist approaches and reader-response criticism against which book history was defined have themselves long since fallen into disuse. Starting with the new historicists, there has been a powerful “historical turn” in the study of literature over the last few decades. Thus, the literary scholar Evelyn B. Tribble situates her study of print marginalia—a project that aims “to reembed the text in the book”—in the context of the “historicizing impulse of Renaissance studies” in the 1980s that sought to locate “texts within the material conditions of early modern England.”<sup>12</sup>

Tribble was not alone in making this move. Indeed, while the center of gravity in studies of reading has shifted toward the material book, there has also been a steady stream of scholarship that has taken a more textual approach.<sup>13</sup> Thus, literary scholars have increasingly turned their attention to printed and manuscript marginalia, printed responses to texts, and printed paratexts to reflect on what they can tell us about the reception of literary, and nonliterary, texts in early modern England. Recent studies have, for example, examined manuscript marginalia to Shakespeare’s poems, Sidney’s *Arcadia*, and early modern printings of Chaucer.<sup>14</sup> They show not only how annota-

11. D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge, 1986; reprint, 1999), 13; see also *Books and Readers*, ed. Anderson and Sauer, 3.

12. Evelyn B. Tribble, *Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England* (Charlottesville, Va., 1993), 1, 3.

13. The dominance of material approaches is perhaps best reflected by the titles of various collections or studies that also engage, sometimes quite extensively, with texts, for example, *Books and Readers*, ed. Andersen and Sauer, and *Reading Women*, ed. Kelly and Brayman Hackel (both published in the Material Texts series, the former with “Material Studies” in its title), and Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge, 2005).

14. Sasha Roberts, “Reading Shakespeare’s Tragedies of Love: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* in Early Modern England,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Richard Dutton, 4 vols. (Oxford, 2003), 1:108–33; Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 137–95; Fred Schurink, “Lives and Letters: Three Early Seventeenth-Century Manuscripts with Extracts from Sidney’s *Arcadia*,” *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* (forthcoming); Alison Wiggins, “What

tions respond to texts and how they shape their meaning, but also how marginalia can throw new light on current critical debates about these literary works and on our critical practice more widely. For instance, the response that a contemporary of Sidney recorded in his annotations in the margin of an early copy of the *Arcadia* complicates and questions recent accounts of the topical political allegory of the work.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, as Sasha Roberts argues, the early modern taste for the conventionality of Shakespeare's poems contrasts with our own preference for their rich complexities and ambiguities; the modern emphasis on the text as a whole with the early modern practice of fragmentation; and our valorization of aesthetic contemplation with the early modern preference for practical application.<sup>16</sup>

Other studies have explored what printed responses can tell us about the way in which early modern readers interpreted particular texts. As Anna Battigelli argues, printed comments on John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* and *Absalom and Achitophel* show that despite his status as an establishment poet, contemporary readers attacked his work frequently and sharply; this allows her to conclude that the poet used the ironic mode to which readers often responded precisely as a means of "expanding and complicating the experiential nature of reading."<sup>17</sup> Using similar kinds of source materials, Kevin Sharpe offers a fascinating exploration of the ways in which the religious meaning and political implications of the Book of Revelation were interpreted and contested in early modern England.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, other scholars have turned to paratexts—the many printed features surrounding the text in early modern books that constitute both an initial response to the text by the author, printer, or other agent and an attempt at shaping the responses of the book's readers.<sup>19</sup> In a recent article Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass transform our understanding of contemporary interest in *Hamlet* by showing that the first quarto (1603), the origins of which have long been associated with a recollection of the text as it was performed in the theater, is in fact the first of

Did Renaissance Readers Write in Their Printed Copies of Chaucer?" *The Library*, 7th ser., 9 (2008): 3–36; Antonina Harbus, "A Renaissance Reader's English Annotations to Thynne's 1532 Edition of Chaucer's Works," *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 342–55.

15. Fred Schurink, "'Like a hand in the margine of a Booke': William Blount's Marginalia and the Politics of Sidney's *Arcadia*," *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 1–24.

16. Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, U.K., 2003). While we question some of Roberts's characterizations of early modern habits of reading below, her wider point that the responses of early readers ask stimulating questions of our own practice is important.

17. Anna Battigelli, "John Dryden's Angry Readers," in *Books and Readers*, ed. Andersen and Sauer, 261–81 at 163.

18. Kevin Sharpe, "Reading Revelations: Policy, Hermeneutics, and Politics," in *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge, 2003), 122–66. See also Kevin Killeen's contribution to this volume.

19. Tribble, *Margins and Marginality*; William W. E. Slights, *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2001); *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge, forthcoming). See also Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997).

Shakespeare's plays to be printed with its *sententiae* marked out for the literary-minded reader.<sup>20</sup>

A number of important recent studies have also tried to close the gap between, on the one hand, the various addresses, appeals, and invitations to readers in print publications and the representations of those readers in the text, and, on the other hand, the real historical readers of those books. In doing so, they combine a close attention to the text of literary works with a better-informed and more sophisticated sense of past practices of reading than earlier studies of reader-response criticism were able to provide and, in some cases, evidence of actual readers. Randall Ingram, pointing to the scant evidence of manuscript marginalia surviving in seventeenth-century collections of verse, for instance, offers a stimulating exploration of the ways in which authors of verse miscellanies anticipated the responses of readers, alongside an extended reading of one epigram in a printed tract.<sup>21</sup> Stephen B. Dobranski looks at the interaction between readers and writers in one very specific genre of early modern literature: incomplete texts that invite their readers to fill in the gaps. His argument is informed by the figure of the active reader that has emerged from recent scholarship, though Dobranski's study does not extend to a consideration of the material traces of the responses of actual readers to the invitations extended to them by the text.<sup>22</sup> In another thought-provoking recent study, Edith Snook explores the representation of reading in a variety of texts by early modern women writers—religious, literary, didactic—and shows how the question of reading provides women with a platform to engage not only with debates about the interpretation of texts and literacy but also with a range of religious, social, and political issues.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, the fascination with marginal annotation and the collection of sentences that was part of the foundational moment of the history of reading has perhaps become circumscribed by the paradigms that have now been established: information retrieval, active reading, reading in parts. "Reading for action," for instance, tends to mean "reading for immediate application." This is a model usefully applied to the evidence of reading left behind by professional practitioners, like physicians. Thus, Peter Murray Jones borrows Sherman's approach to describe the copiously annotated medical library of Thomas Lorkyn, Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge University

20. Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass, "The First Literary *Hamlet* and the Commonplacing of Professional Plays," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59 (2008): 371–420.

21. Randall Ingram, "Lego Ego: Reading Seventeenth-Century Books of Epigrams," in *Books and Readers*, ed. Andersen and Sauer, 160–76. Interestingly, Ingram is playfully self-conscious about the literariness of his own contribution to a collection of essays that bears the subtitle *Material Studies*. He worries that his attention to prefatory advice means that he is re-creating the implied reader of yesterday. "I risk isolating myself," he frets; "this essay could stand out as the only essay in this volume to have been produced by a specific reader rather than to have emerged unmediated from objective evidence," and again, "I am surprised and dismayed to realize that, despite my enthusiasm for the multidisciplinary approaches to past reading, this essay depends heavily on literary texts as evidence and thus reaffirms the disciplinary boundaries in which I work" (160, 173).

22. Stephen B. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005).

23. Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, U.K., 2005).

from 1564 to 1591, seeing in his books evidence of “the practical orientation” of medical reading. The annotations “are meant to help Lorkyn himself and other users of his books in ordering and assimilating their own reading, comparing and criticizing what they read, and preparing the medical reader to carry his understanding of what he reads into action.”<sup>24</sup> We might nonetheless note that physicians also saw into print commonplace books—collections of sayings drawn from moral, spiritual, and medical sources—and these propose a different reading style, one that is as much contemplative as active. The Dutch physician Levine Lemnius urges readers of his collection of herbal metaphors and stories from the Bible, *Herbarum atque arborum quae in Bibliis passim obviae sunt explicatio*, to “advisedly consider [*attentè considerare*], and attentively discusse [*intimè excutere*] the deepe mysteries and profound knowledge laid vp” in those “wholesome documents [*salutaria documenta*].”<sup>25</sup> Such contemplative reading has a practical end, though: the reader’s well-being.

Models of utilitarian reading have often encouraged literary scholars to neglect the text. The focus on the records of reading—for example, marginalia and commonplace books—in isolation from other sources, and especially more literary, textual sources, and from the context of their use in early modern England has brought many scholars to the conclusion that contemporary readers tended to extract brief quotations with scant respect for their meaning and context in the larger text, and furthermore, that annotators and compilers of commonplace books read not to understand or appreciate texts on their own terms but with an eye to the application of these detachable textual fragments to the circumstances of their own lives.<sup>26</sup> This in turn has given rise to the idea of the pragmatic reader, of which Gabriel Harvey is one representative example and the seventeenth-century country gentleman Sir William Drake another.<sup>27</sup> None of this is to suggest that either of these readers was not pragmatic in some sense—that is, keen to get on in the world or even, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, hard-headed, unprincipled, and self-seeking.<sup>28</sup> However, it is not clear why this has become the dominant model of humanist reading practice in critical studies,

24. Peter Murray Jones, “Reading Medicine in Tudor Cambridge,” in *The History of Medical Education in Britain*, ed. Vivian Nutton and Roy Porter (Atlanta, Ga., 1995), 153–83 at 169–70. Ian Maclean, *Logic, Signs, and Nature in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2002), 221.

25. Levine Lemnius, *An Herbal for the Bible*, trans. Thomas Newton (London, 1587), sig. B3v, and *Herbarum atque arborum quae in Bibliis passim obviae sunt explicatio* (Antwerp, 1566), sig. B3r.

26. See Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford, 1996); Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing and Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J., 1993).

27. Jardine and Grafton, “‘Studied for Action,’” 63; Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, Conn., 2000), 84–85, 99. Jardine and Grafton’s study of Harvey’s use of Livy does not by any means neglect the text. Their essay would have been far less impressive had they not already understood the text that he was reading; they would not have been able to display so persuasively the close attention he paid to Livy over so many years: for example, his painstaking combing of the text so as to “link performances by protagonists in the Livy with real-life stories of Elizabethan ambassadors ‘winning the day’ with their feats of words” (63), or, indeed, his single-minded commitment to finding what is useful as well as his appreciation of stylistic effects.

28. *OED*, “pragmatic,” sense A5.

or, indeed, why the origins of this model are so readily forgotten: the utilitarian model of the humanist curriculum established by Jardine and Grafton, not in their study of Harvey's reading of Livy, but in an earlier work, *From Humanism to the Humanities*.<sup>29</sup> To be blunt, if one's only evidence of reading is fragments of texts, what conclusions can be drawn other than that readers "read in parts," most likely out of self-interest?

Such conclusions have not gone unchallenged. In one of the most wide-ranging reassessments of reading practice in early modern England, Heidi Brayman Hackel explains that while commonplace books certainly do fragment reading, discussions "always situate this tool within the context of the development of the reader's knowledge, judgment, and understanding." She is reminded of this by Erasmus's emphasis in *De copia* on the usefulness of the commonplace book for "fix[ing] what you have read more firmly in your mind." Thus, though we might think of the early modern reader as "a hunter on the look-out for maxims and metaphors," with little interest in "plot and content," some manuscript commonplace books do in fact reflect a careful reading of whole literary texts and reveal a respect for the intentions of the author.<sup>30</sup> Brayman Hackel attends to several manuscript commonplace books with extracts from Elizabethan literary works, including those by Robert Greene and Philip Sidney, and she finds in two of these an awareness of the "integrity of the work" and of "particular plots."<sup>31</sup> And yet the paradigm of "reading in parts" is hard to shift. Even Brayman Hackel, who questions its usefulness, ends up endorsing it. Because the commonplace book remains the primary evidence of the act of reading, she sees readers as searching for "serviceable topics," fragments tagged "for future use."<sup>32</sup> And even the two "literary" commonplace books she describes cannot help but look like exceptions to the rule. In the end, the most literary of the two compilers still "quickly establishes his willingness to bend any passage to suit his will."<sup>33</sup>

The most significant challenge to this paradigm of reading has come from literary scholars in the field of early modern education and rhetoric. This work has confirmed that the habit of "reading in parts" was instilled in the grammar school. Rhetorical training in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries *did* encourage readers to break up texts. In a familiar passage from *Ludus Literarius; or, The Grammar Schoole* (1612), the schoolmaster John Brinsley explains how boys should mark difficult Latin words in their books with ink or black lead (or with their fingernails) and "reade ouer" them "vntill they be as perfect in them, as in any of the rest of their bookes."<sup>34</sup> He also explains that they should be encouraged to gather quotations, storing these in a

29. Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1986).

30. Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 142–46, citing Erasmus, *De copia*, in *Literary and Educational Writings 2: De copia / De ratione studii*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, trans. Betty I. Knott and Brian McGregor, vol. 24 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz et al. (Toronto, 1978), 638.

31. Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 187, 191: respectively, the Stirling manuscript (Folger V.a.307) and a seventeenth-century manuscript commonplace book (Folger V.b.83).

32. *Ibid.*, 145–46.

33. *Ibid.*, 191.

34. John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius; or, The Grammar Schoole* (London, 1612), sig. G3v.

“commonplace-book,” as well as reading printed commonplace books so they have “the matter of the best Authors” to hand. What is this if not the fragmentation of texts? Yet the point of such collection, Brinsley explains, is to give pupils a store of “the choyssest sayings of the very wisest of all ages” that they can draw upon when composing “themes” (prose essays) or preparing disputations at university “like as it is in Diuinity, Law, Physick, and whatsoeuer other Artes” (sig. 2B2v). Peter Mack has shown that the habit of collecting individual sentences under headings in commonplace books was balanced by the attention paid to the logical structure of whole speeches and poems in humanist manuals of rhetoric and dialectic and in a curriculum based on these manuals in the grammar schools and universities of early modern England.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, *sententiae* taken from one’s reading, or supplied by a schoolmaster, were gathered in order to be reworked in classroom exercises, and this constituted training in moral philosophy as well as rhetoric.<sup>36</sup>

What this scholarship highlights is the nearly universal connection of reading with composition in the schools and universities of early modern England.<sup>37</sup> To separate the two seriously misrepresents early modern reading. When schoolboys extracted wise sayings and other quotations from their texts (by Cicero or Virgil, for example), their instructors’ hope was that they would reuse these materials in their compositional exercises, and, in the process of doing so, *absorb* them. The dissolution of the original text into discrete fragments was not an end in itself but merely a first step in a process that was ultimately directed to the creation of new, and often morally thoughtful, writing. Readers may have done this rather badly. When one schoolboy, Griffith Price, used his printed commonplace book to prepare themes, he lifted quotations out of Thomas of Ireland’s *Manipulus florum* without making any effort to arrange them “in a coherent manner.”<sup>38</sup> However, sometimes they did this very well. In *King Lear*, “a play,” Mack argues, “that is rich in moral sentences,” Shakespeare tests his characters’ use of moral comment or judgment against the action of the play and the responses of other characters.<sup>39</sup>

35. Peter Mack, “Rhetoric, Ethics, and Reading in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005): 1–21 at 3–4. See also his “Rudolph Agricola’s Reading of Literature,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 48 (1985): 23–41, and “Ramus Reading: The Commentaries on Cicero’s *Consular Orations* and Vergil’s *Eclogues* and *Georgics*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 61 (1999): 111–41.

36. Mack, “Rhetoric, Ethics, and Reading.”

37. Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002), 11–75; Fred Schurink, “Education and Reading in Elizabethan and Jacobean England” (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2004), 34–153, and “An Elizabethan Grammar School Exercise Book,” *Bodleian Library Record* 18 (2003): 174–96; Kees Meerhoff, “Imitation: analyse et création textuelles,” in *Renaissance-Poetik = Renaissance Poetics*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin, 1994), 114–32, and “The Significance of Philipp Melanchthon’s Rhetoric in the Renaissance,” in *Renaissance Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Mack (Basingstoke, U.K., 1994), 46–62. See also Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England: Reading “The Anatomy of Melancholy”* (Cambridge, 2010), 20.

38. Schurink, “Grammar School Exercise Book,” 182–83.

39. Mack, “Rhetoric, Ethics, and Reading,” 17–18. See also Paul Hammond, “The Play of Quotation and Commonplace in *King Lear*,” in *Toward a Definition of Topos: Approaches to Analogical Reasoning*, ed. Lynette Hunter (Houndmills, U.K., 1991), 78–129.

The point is that thinking about writing—about *texts*—can often help us to understand reading. In some special cases, there is a clear relation between the text, annotation, and a reader's own writing. Not always of course: the advice on diet that Gabriel Harvey records in his student law book, Joachim Hopperus's *In veram iurisprudentiam isagoge*, is suggestive more of "a bee in [his] bonnet rather than anything instigated by his reading of Hopper."<sup>40</sup> But sometimes there is a connection that is instructive for the historian of reading. Harvey was not just a reader of political histories for patrons like the Earl of Leicester but also a practiced reader of vernacular literary texts *and* a writer too; this also shapes his political views. His annotation of James VI and I's *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie* (1584), for example, is best read alongside his collaborative print publication with Edmund Spenser, *Three Proper, and Wittie, Familiar Letters* (1580), and the marginalia in his copy of George Gascoigne's *Certayne Notes of Instruction, concerning the making of verse or ryme in English* (1575). In the margins of *Essayes*, Harvey compares the king's advice on the "reulis" for vernacular poetry in Scotland with contemporary debates about English poetry, to which he had contributed, no doubt seeking to establish common ground with the poet-king in waiting. In so doing he constructs James as a king for a commonwealth, one who understands the collective responsibility for rule making.<sup>41</sup> Harvey must have had his copy of *Essayes* open in front of him as he was writing one of his last pamphlets in the quarrel with Thomas Nashe, *Pierces Supererogation* (1593), for he unaccountably makes James "stand as a republican example, anticipating the lost opportunity for conversation with him if gentlemen cannot match his learning: 'When young Kings have such a care of their flourishing Prime; and like Cato, are ready to enter an accompt of their vacant howers . . . how should gentlemen of yeeres, employ the golden talent of their Industry, and travaile.'"<sup>42</sup>

Attending to writing can also helpfully lead us back to the reader-in-the-text. Mary Ann Lund's recent study of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* focuses specifically on "the author's own construction of the reading process," and thus she reserves the study of readers' marks for her conclusion. Lund has a clear sense of both the benefits and limitations of current approaches in the history of reading, even for an author like Burton, whose rambling, ever-expanding work is more encyclopedia than narrative. "One could conduct a study of Burton as reader solely by examining his library holdings and marginalia," she argues, but "it would be foolish to perform this task without consulting the *Anatomy*, a work which one critic compares to the experience of entering 'a vast library' with Burton as guide."<sup>43</sup>

Finally, we should note that these reading habits are not only the preserve of the male readers who had benefited from a grammar-school education. Lady Margaret

40. Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh, 1996), 72–73.

41. Jennifer Richards, "Gabriel Harvey, James VI, and the Politics of Reading Early Modern Poetry," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71 (2008): 303–21.

42. Jennifer Richards, "Gabriel Harvey's Choleric Writing," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford, 2009), 655–70 at 669, quoting Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces Supererogation* (London, 1593), sig. G4r.

43. Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion*, 1, 21.

Hoby's diary, which traces her spiritual development, tells us a great deal about the reading habits of an elite gentlewoman. Hoby keeps a commonplace book and a table book and records notes in her "testament," or Bible.<sup>44</sup> She reads alone and in company; she reads to her household and is read to by her chaplain and friends; she meditates on what she has read and discusses it. By selecting and recording passages in her commonplace book, Hoby is also fragmenting her books, extracting what seems immediately relevant to her, although she does so in order to become a morally improved reader. Likewise, in this volume, Helen Smith notes the practice of one exceptional woman reader, Elizabeth I, who digested her books like a humanist scholar, excerpting and using *sententiae* from her reading, although Smith suggests that she mused on rather than pragmatically used them.



The essays in this volume aim to give new prominence to the engagement of readers with the texts they were reading and to writing as a witness of practices of reading. They also seek to bring literary and textual approaches into conversation with material studies of the book. We are not turning our backs on new developments in book history but rather arguing for *more* models of reading to understand the cultural and social impact of manuscript and print and the "use" of books, while still taking account of the text read. We are mindful of the fact that books had many uses, including ones that were not directed primarily—or even tangentially—toward the text, hence the dual focus represented in the title to this volume. Moreover, we have organized the volume to reflect this insight and to represent an increasing rather than exclusive engagement with the "textuality" of reading: we move from the essays early in the volume that focus on material evidence, and that are firmly embedded in current debates in the history of reading, to essays that make the case more directly for the importance of literary study to the history of reading.

Thus, the first three essays in this volume explore how we might understand and re-interpret both the material evidence of book-use and the conception of the materiality—or physiology—of reading. Jason Scott-Warren takes as his starting point the now-familiar emphasis on the sheer variety of marks that readers left behind, many of which, he recognizes, might be better conceived as graffiti rather than as annotations.<sup>45</sup> This does not lead him to give up on such evidence, to conclude dispiritedly that the real historical reader is not really reading after all. On the contrary, he argues

44. Lady Margaret Hoby, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599–1605*, ed. Joanna Moody (Stroud, U.K., 1998). For an overview of Hoby's reading practice, see Danielle Clarke, "Gender, Material Culture, and the Hybridity of Renaissance Writing," in *Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing 1500–1650*, ed. Margaret Healy and Tom Healy (Edinburgh 2009), 112–27. See also Sherman, *Used Books*, 53–67. On women's reading, see also the important collection by Brayman Hackel and Kelly, *Reading Women*.

45. Sherman, *Used Books*, 10, and "What Did Renaissance Readers Write in Their Books?," in *Books and Readers*, ed. Andersen and Sauer, 119–37 at 130–33; Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 158–59.

that these marks need interpreting, too, and draws on Juliet Fleming's historically inflected description of early modern "graffiti" as "socially acceptable," meaningful scratchings, markings, and scribbling to do so.<sup>46</sup> Thinking about marks in books as graffiti prompts Scott-Warren to ask a different kind of question, not so much what do they tell us about reading, but rather what kind of space is the early modern page? The evidence, he suggests, is that the page is a place of public performance. He shows that books are a part of everyday sociability, and this leads him to call for a new "anthropology of reading," one that attends to the social lives of books as well as the sociability to which the graffiti in them bear witness.

There is no better source for an anthropology of reading than domestic books, although the genres of writing that fall under this category have long been overlooked, Wendy Wall complains, because they are deemed "the product of informal training." In the second of our essays, Wall turns attention to domestic books—books on husbandry, medicine, and, primarily, cookery—to recover what she terms "culinary literacy," exploring the intersection between domestic work and the abilities of women to read and write. There are two significant parts to her analysis. First, she is interested in the way in which printed manuals train the female reader in the skills of housewifery and the art of reading. Wall is wonderfully attentive to the advice that male authors often give to female readers on the art of reading but also to the way in which the form of how-to books is an integral part of the experience of reading, introducing women to different ideologies of the household and housework. Existing alongside printed advice by mainly male authors are manuscript collections penned by women, and Wall turns her attention to these as historical evidence of culinary literacy in the second half of her essay. Women used these collections to record and pass on favorite recipes but also to practice letters, signatures, and new, fashionable hands. The achievement of this important and wide-ranging essay is to enable us to see reading and writing as, quite literally, material practices. For many women readers *and* writers there is little difference between learning to cut pastry letters and learning to wield a pen. It is time that histories of literacy and education took account of this.

The emphasis on the materiality of reading is developed in still a different way by Helen Smith, who shows that the act of reading was embodied for early modern men and women. Smith traces the effects of reading on, and its relationship to, different body parts: the eye, the heart, the ear, and the stomach. She is interested in not only the bodily metaphors used to describe reading, like digestion, but also the physical effect of reading on the person and, more mysteriously, the text: William Alexander graciously imagines the eye-beams of his female dedicatee transforming, even correcting the errors of, his work. More suggestively, though, Smith explores how a conception of the physiology of reading shapes the way in which women's reading was understood. Her essay is full of examples of good and bad women readers: good readers who weep when they read about some cruel martyrdom or who exercise exemplary self-control. Bad readers, it seems, do neither. The understanding of the physiological effects of

46. Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (London, 2001), 9–72.

reading shapes advice given to women. Women, like men, are encouraged to digest their books, not least because this re-creates the mind and body, though some moralists also worry that they might digest the wrong books/foods. As Smith urges us to recognize, historians of the material book need also to take account of a deep-rooted preoccupation with how texts are absorbed.

Smith draws on a wide range of sources that describe the reading of women, applying the comment by Michel de Certeau about navigating city streets to the study of reading to make the point that marginal annotations are a record of reading, not the act itself: “even the most precise analyses of marginalia and paratextual instructions ‘miss what was: the act itself. . . The trace left behind is substituted for the practice.’” The same can be said of many historical records, of course, and such a realization should not lead us to reject marginalia as sources of evidence for a history of reading; that, in the words of Anthony Grafton, would be a “counsel of despair.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, we want to argue that if we handle marginalia sensitively as sources and acknowledge that they are reflections of reading governed by their own conventions, rather than the act of reading itself, they remain some of the best evidence we have of how past readers engaged with texts. Looked at from a different angle, however, marginalia are themselves “texts”: forms of writing in need of interpretation. Daniel Wakelin, in his provocative study of the fifteenth-century author and annotator William of Worcester, points out that “we can, in practice, still look carefully *through* ‘documents’ like Worcester’s: but we can also look directly *at* them; we have the option of adding to the historical study of reading the ‘interpretation’ of its written texts.”<sup>48</sup> The realization that in most cases we can discover how readers read only because they have left a written record of their reading encourages us to apply our skills as literary critics to the sources of the history of reading. As Wakelin notes, “such a reconceptualization might allow a rapprochement between the history of reading and the concerns of literary criticism.”<sup>49</sup>

The next three essays in this volume all consider what the material evidence of reading, in the form of marginal annotations and manuscript commonplace books, can tell us about the reception of literary texts. Wakelin’s own contribution, moreover, shows what a literary sensitivity to the status of such sources as texts can contribute to our understanding of reading. He carefully teases out the ambiguous status of marginal annotations in poetic manuscripts from the fifteenth century as both prescriptions for future reading and a record of previous acts of reading by their scribes. Moreover, he establishes how such notes, on the one hand, seem to be directive and imply passive readers who have an interpretation of the text imposed on them but, on the other hand, offer numerous clues that readers were by no means always minded to follow their instructions—indeed, one of the functions of annotations, Wakelin argues, was precisely to preempt such deviant responses. His essay not only offers

47. Anthony Grafton, “Is the History of Reading a Marginal Enterprise? Guillaume Budé and His Books,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 91 (1997): 139–57 at 155.

48. Daniel Wakelin, “William Worcester Writes a History of His Reading,” *New Medieval Literatures* 7 (2005): 53–71 at 54.

49. *Ibid.*, 70.

us a glimpse of the “pre-history” of the more familiar printed marginalia of the era following the introduction of the printing press but also challenges the dominant paradigm that has emerged from scholarship on printed marginalia: that such paratexts “controlled” the reader.<sup>50</sup> Wakelin makes an eloquent case for what he elsewhere calls the “freedom” of readers.<sup>51</sup>

Commonplace books also represent more complex evidence of reading than we have perhaps so far allowed. These books have long been of interest to historians of reading, and because of their composition—extracts from reading organized under headings ready for reuse—they have underpinned some of the key models discussed above. However, as Brayman Hackel has argued, they also represent other kinds of reading, including what she calls “recreational reading.” In his contribution to this volume, Fred Schurink argues that we need yet *more* models. Commonplace books are representative of a variety of reading practices and interests, which may be political, moral, recreational, and rhetorical. But this is just the starting point of Schurink’s argument. His aim is not simply to recover the variety of readers but the different contexts that produced the manuscript commonplace books in the first place. By attending to the conditions of reading, he suggests, we can begin to address a different problem of fragmentation that has long dogged the history of reading: the difficult work of producing not more individual case studies but building a “general picture” of the reception of vernacular literature. Schurink offers such an approach in his analysis of three commonplace books, all of them produced in different contexts: a well-used manuscript from an aristocratic household that probably belonged to Robert Sidney, with excerpts from political and historical works and the 1593 edition of Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*; a scholar’s notebook containing extracts from Sidney and John Lyly’s *Euphues*; and a commonplace book belonging to a country gentleman with a taste for London theater, with extracts from English translations of classical and modern moral essays, histories, and vernacular plays.

Nelleke Moser’s essay similarly explores how social and institutional contexts affected the reception of literature; and her focus is likewise on two manuscript commonplace books with extracts from literary texts. What is distinctive about her essay, however, is that she directs our attention across the Channel to the situation in the Low Countries, opening up new perspectives on the cultures of reading in early modern England in the process. In particular, her essay demonstrates the centrality of the chambers of rhetoric, largely made up of middle-class readers and writers of poetry, to the literary culture of the Low Countries, in contrast to the seeming dominance of socially exclusive institutions such as the universities and the Inns of Court in the circulation of manuscript poetry in England. Moser also reveals the impact of the religious and political upheavals during the Eighty Years’ War (1568–1648) on the practices of reading and writing in the Dutch Republic, contrary to the relative stability in

50. See Slights, *Managing Readers*; Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 69–136.

51. Daniel Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature 1430–1530* (Oxford, 2007), 16 and passim. See also his “Possibilities for Reading: Classical Translations in Parallel Texts ca. 1520–1558,” *Studies in Philology* 105 (2008): 463–86.

England prior to the Civil War. Perhaps equally striking, however, are some of the details she provides about early modern reading and sociability, recording, for instance, poems being copied from a glass or the woodwork in a friend's house, or a catalogue compiled by one amateur poet to enable his friends to choose which poems they would like to copy, or house visits paid to view both paintings and manuscript poetry collections. These details are often not available from English sources, or at least have not been uncovered so far.

The last three essays in this volume reflect the insight that it is often writing, *texts*, that offer the best evidence of reading, and they show how this idea can help us vary our models of reading. Thus, Kevin Killeen calls for attention to the large and significant body of writing on Biblical hermeneutics in early modern England, especially typological interpretations of Old Testament kings. He passionately argues for the restoration of the Bible to the center of our histories of early modern reading, alongside the ancient Greek and Roman texts that have dominated previous scholarship. Killeen's essay highlights the difference between theories of reading the Bible and of reading the classics, with the Bible communicating its own meaning through the passive reader—"interpreting the interpreter," in the wonderfully suggestive phrase he quotes. However, his examples equally demonstrate how, in practice, readers of the Bible did not perhaps behave so differently from the type of reader of the classics with whom we have become familiar, fitting the text to the purpose at hand and marshalling its argument in support of whatever ideology the reader happened to espouse—so that the same Old Testament king could be "used by Anglican-Royalists, English and International Catholics, and fiercely anti-Jacobean Protestants." Biblical hermeneutics is clearly an area that deserves further attention from historians of reading, as much for its theories of reading and social range as for its centrality to the political and religious controversies of seventeenth-century England.<sup>52</sup>

In the next essay, in fact, Patricia Pender takes up the theme of Bible reading and its contested status, but her focus is less on theories of reading than on debates over the access to, interpretation of, and use of the Bible in the wake of the Reformation, and on the role of gender in these disputes. Pender's essay strikingly illustrates the central question of this volume by finding in Anne Askew's account of her trial and John Bale's commentary evidence of practices of reading that are at the same time radically textual, because based on the direct and unmediated encounter of the individual believer with the word of God, and embodied and material: the text of the Bible, as both Bale and Askew maintain, comes to life in the actions of the reader, specifically Askew's martyrdom for her faith. Similarly, Askew's disputes with the authorities centered both on her interpretation of scripture and on the provocative actions prompted by such reading, including her public perusal of the Bible in Lincoln Cathedral despite threats from the resident priests and her separation from her husband, for which she claimed the authority of a passage from First Corinthians. As well as considering Askew's interpretation of the Bible and Bale's edition of her testimony, Pender

52. See also Sharpe, "Reading Revelations."

importantly focuses attention on current debates over the nature of Askew's text, revealing some of the continuities between early modern and modern reading and their politics.

In the last essay of the collection, Cathy Shrank explores the many ways in which literary texts (in the broad sense of the term) can help us think about reading. She shows how texts in the campaign against Mary Queen of Scots reflect the reading of their authors, who interpreted and recycled examples from the Bible, the classics, and historical documents. Her essay reveals how self-conscious authors were about this practice, as they make the process of reading a topic of discussion in their texts. Shrank further demonstrates how these publications shaped the responses of their readers, drawing attention to the role of both literary and material forms in directing the reader to certain interpretations of literary texts. What is particularly interesting about her essay is that it identifies a particular kind of text, the dialogue, as a key site for the exploration of questions of reading. For, through the replies of the interlocutors to each other's arguments, Shrank argues, dialogues offer a model for readers' responses to the text. With its emphasis on the textual as well as the material dimension of reading, and the multiple ways in which literary texts and the skills of the literary critic can contribute to our histories of reading, Shrank's contribution is a fitting conclusion to a series of essays that query, complicate, and also in several cases defend what we are calling the "textuality" of reading.

So where do we go from here? The contributions to this volume show how far the history of reading has come since the days when scholars were concerned with "implied" rather than real readers, and the main paradigm at their disposal was a proposed shift from intensive to extensive reading. They demonstrate the extraordinary vitality of scholarship in this area and the variety of approaches and models now available, and they contribute to the field by opening up further lines of research. Kitchen literacy, editing as reading, strong readers, typological interpretations, the anthropology of reading: all of these are important and innovative ways of thinking about the interactions of owners with their books and the texts they contained.

Moreover, these studies show the insights offered by textual as well as material studies of reading and the importance of continued conversation between the two. There is perhaps a danger that the study of the material book and its uses can become disconnected from the concerns of literary criticism and vice versa. We feel this would be regrettable, as the two fields have significant contributions to make to each other. On the one hand, as we have argued throughout this introduction, an attention to texts, as well as the skills and approaches of literary criticism, can push our thinking about reading and the use of books in new directions. On the other hand, we believe questions of reading are fundamental to our understanding of the history of literary—and nonliterary—works and can inform literary criticism and interpretation in important ways. It is for these reasons that we make our argument for the continued relevance and import of the concept of "reading" in our critical discourse. It is in the activity of reading that textual and material concerns converge, and histories of reading enable us to maintain and develop the vital connection between textuality and materiality.

This volume had its origins in the conference “Early Modern Reading: Books, Communities, Conversations” at Newcastle University, 11–12 April 2008. We are grateful to the participants in the conference for their stimulating papers and discussions and, in particular, to the three keynote speakers: Jason Scott-Warren, Cathy Shrank, and Daniel Wakelin.

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